99/4 USERS OF AMERICA

September 1982 Newsletter

TI ANNOUNCES TWO SPECTACULAR REBATES!

Get a firm grip on your dentures troops, as Texas Instruments has invented a new promotion. Starting on September 1, 1982 through December 31, 1982, you will get a $100 rebate on a new 99/4A purchase. Simply put, if you purchase a console from us at $325 you actually pay $225 if you deduct your rebate!

If that isn't enough to grow hair on the soles of your feet, try this for a kicker! You can also receive a "free" speech spythesizer with every six solid state command modules you purchase. Just send TI your receipt dated 9,1,82 or later, and they will ship you your synthesizer. Naturally, I anticipated that these give away programs would generate the usual national shortages! Therefore, I stocked up on such sometimes rare items as cassette cables, synthesizers, arcade games, and etc.

Incidentally, if you still want to exchange your faithful old 99/4 for a new 99/4A, you can no longer do it at your Exchange Center. You now send your old console and $199.95 directly to the Repair Center in Lubbock, TX. Personally, I fail to see why anybody would want to give their old console away, when they could keep it and get a new console for almost the same price! Keep that old sucker and use it for an arcade console, or donate it to some deceived soul who is about to make the VIC 20 mistake!

THE PERIPHERIAL EXPANSION SYSTEM: A HARD SQUINT

I received the first advance unit on 7,15,82, unfortunately no cards came with it! I dogeared the manual and polished the cabinet while I waited impatiently for the next UPS delivery. The truck roared in on 7,18,82 and my UPS driver was muttering dark oaths as he started draging boxes towards my front porch!

I installed the 32K RAM, RS/232, and interface cards per the instructions of the manual, a rare behaviorial mode for me! I powered it up and the self-test lights dutifully winked on and off. I keyed in a short program and tried to access the RAM, it worked perfectly. Smiling broadly I next tried a dump to the printer. My curser vanished and the system went into convulsions! I powered down and tried it from the top. Somewhere I think that I heard someone playings taps softly.

TI and I had several conversations about this problem and they promptly shipped me a replacement PES with appropiate cards. The problem seems to be that the cards do not seat deep enough into the mother board. My RS/232 card apparently moved slightly and shorted the system out, blowing the interface as well as the RS/232. TI has assured me that this problem has now been corrected.

The replacement box works well, although once in a while it goes dead and locks my system up. I then lift the television off, pop the top, and hit the interface card with my fist! This solves the problem, although I can't figure out why, or how, that lousy card is moving in the first place!

What about the internal disk drive? Well, controller cards are not shipping for mysterious reasons. I did manage to get one and attempted to hook my drive up. Unfortunately I was missing the internal ribbon cable that

runs from the rear of the drive to the right hand side of the controller card! TI sent me one in 24 hours and I did get the internal drive to operate. Next came my second drive, or so I thought. I discovered that I was now missing the special ribbon cable for attaching external drives to the PES when using the internal drive as drive one! TI got me one of those in 24 hours also! I now have the whole thing working and it only took me forty-two days!

It does work well and it does get rid of all of those awkward power cords and bulky hardware peripherials. It has not overheated with ten hours of constant use and it has not blown any new gaskets. Once you put this thing together do not plan on moving it! It weighs in at about 32 pounds and is too delicate for easy mobility. Nobody in their right mental state would want to disassemble this baby and move it. The interface cable is wide and the plug connecting it to the console is huge. It is clumsey and still clutters up the right side of the console. Reminds me of the belt my Father used to beat my butt with!

It is a good product, but it still needs a few minor refinements to make it totally satisfactory. The manuals are sometimes incorrect in the assembly instructions; like how to install the drive and attach the ribbon cable. It works well when you get it assembled right. It is definately the way to go for serious computer devotees. It does save space, as you can park your monitor or television atop it. The biggest problem is in supply, as usual! They are difficult to come by and some cards are nearly impossible. I truly hope that Texas Instruments gets their production rolling and can fill the myriad of orders out there in TI Land. Despite my own personal problems with the PES, I feel it is a worth while investment for those of you who have the patience to wait. This system will offer many new avenues in the future via different cards and holds great promise for serious programmers. We are shipping them out as fast as the turtle crawls in with them, so if you haven't gotten yours yet...PATIENCE! It is worth your wait.

TUNNELS OF DOOM: A FANTASY MIND BOMB!

Find the King and his orb of power before the vicious monsters remove his head! Your steps are counted and your tries are limited! Search through silent halls for treasure, vaults, chests, weapons, or magical items. Every door holds a secret, but there may be evil creatures protecting its secrets! You can play with one to four players, roam through up to ten levels of dungeons, and be challenged by three difficulty levels.

Hit a single key for movement, to trade items, to use magical impliments, to check for invisible doors or passageways, to break through a door, and more. Take a chance of drinking from a magical fountain or try to bribe a living statue with gold to learn the power of a magical item. Purchase weapons very carefully, as each player has limitations and can't use everything! A General Store is on the first, fourth, and eighth levels; but beware of the inflation level of prices!

You see the graphic perspective change as you move, arrows fly, and creatures attack. Super graphics, sensational sound, and a test for any Dungeons and Dragons addict. Even has Pennis And Prizes for children, no weapons, monsters, or magical items. A real fun challenge and it plays very well. Variety is limitless and no two games are the same either! Find a vault and try to guess the combination quickly, as your player gets a wound each time you error. Once you find the King and his orb of power the monsters are

determined not to let you out alive. You must make it all the way back to the first level to win the game! You can also stop the game and save it to either diskette or tape for resumption later on. It is a super program and one that I feel all ages can play. Suggested retail is $59.95 and your price is $46.50 on diskette or tape. We have them currently in stock, but this little sucker isn't going to stay around for long!

NEAT NEW GAMES FROM FUTURA!

The following games are soon to be released by Futura, and they do sound exciting. We will print a review of them for you after we have had adequate time to play-test each of them. Death Station, Cosmic Drift, Hopper, Getcha!, and Air Missile Command. These are in X/Basic and retail for $19.95 each. Two assembly language games are headed your way also! The Paragon Game and Viral Vendetta require X/Basic and X/RAM. They will retail on diskette for $24.95.

READING ROUNDUP: BULLDOG THAT IDIOM

This is one of a series of reading modules produced by the Scott Foresman Co. and is for grade level four. It graphically depicts several stories while displaying the words on the screen. A variety of sound features are neatly worked into the module, including some nice music.

This module deals with learning to use and identify idioms, word meanings, and figures of speech. There is a review feature at the end which permits the child to test himself, or herself, on all three areas of learning. The student is provided with structured examples and explainations prior to each clever story. The graphics are sensational, the stories are interesting, and the variety is excellent. My seventh grade daughter, Shelly Fischer, reviewed this module and loved it! I hate to admit it, but I had forgotten what an idiom was. Needless to say, Shelly taught me that quite rapidly! It is an excellent series and one your child will enjoy and learn from. Suggested retail is $54.95 and your price is $41.50. See the July newsletter for a brief description of each module!

SPECIALS FOR THE MONTH

The following items will be available only until 9,30,82 and the quanities are limited as shown!

1. Personal Record Keeping: $37 (2) units
2. Munch Man $29.50 (2) units
3. TI Logo $74.50 (1) unit
4. Joysticks $26 (4) units
5. Mini Memory $72.50 (2) units
6. Extended Basic $71.95 (6) units

USED PRODUCTS FOR SALE!

1. Sony DXC-1600 Color Video Camera. This is a professional camera with an adjustable zoom lense, selectable focus, eight F stops, four light filters, built-in high sensitivity condenser mike, CRT view screen in the camera,

and Trinatron circuitry. It comes with a tripod that adjusts height, front/back position, left/right angle, and allows for fixed or pan action. It also has a hand held mount and battery pack for remote use. External power supply for AC use and master control box for color adjustjments and other video features. Included is a 100 foot cable and a 25 foot cable. Control box allows for interfacing with microphones, video recorders, televisions, and more.

This is a professional unit and generates incredible resolution with super detail. It is two years old and retailed for $3000, not including the tripod, cables, hand mount, or battery pack. The owner will sell it for $1850 complete, and frankly it is a steal! This camera is compatable with all VHS video recorders.

2. Expansion RAM-32K Hardware Peripherial. This is not the new RAM card. It is six months old and in flawless condition. Owner will sell it for the price of $250 delivered. A nice buy for those of you who do not want the expense of the PES.

FUTURA ANNOUNCES PRICE INCREASES

We have been advised by FUTURA that they will raise their software prices effective 10,1,82. The following programs are involved: Casino Pack and Dr. Nuttier will be $21.95 on diskette, Word Proccesser, General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable, Inventory Management, and Billing will all be $149.95. The Mail List program will be $99.95. These are the only changes that we know of at the present time.

SEPTEMBER SOFTWARE SPECIALS

The following software programs will be offered during the month of September for near giveaway prices. We are doing this on an experimental basis to see how you users respond to it.

1. X/Basic: All Star Baseball, All Star Bowling, Wall St., Galectic War, London Blitz, Starship Concord, Laser Battle, Fowl Play, The Hustler, Chutes and Sharks, and Ice Caverns Of Xen. How about $16.95 each!
2. Mail List and Word Proccessor: $58.95 and $84.95!

WANT TO READ AN ERROR MESSAGE ALOUD?

One of our California users has found a clever way to have error messages read via the TE#2 in TI Basic! His program has five options that permit a full screen read out to having the messages spelled and spoken. You can have an asterick search or opt for just the desired lines or have the last six lines of the screen read. It is put into your program as a sub routine and can be accessed by typing RUN 20000. It can literally read aloud any message the computer prints out on your screen! A most helpful tool for debugging and editing. The only equipment needed is your console, speech synthesizer, TE#2, and a cassette recorder. This program will be available on tape from us starting 9 ,20,82 for a cost of $12.50. It is easy to use, fast, and very efficient. It is a godsend for those of us who have a vision problem!

BYTE ON THIS!

The mistakes a computer can make in a microsecond would take the average man an entire lifetime!

SCHOLASTIC SPELLER: SPILLING KEN BEE PHUN!

This educational module comes in grade ranges from one through six and does use speech. I tackled level six and tested my fifth grade daughter, Becky Fischer, on it. It has thirty-six different catagories and three different games.

The individual levels test the child by using words that have special sounds; such as long and short letters or the "ou" sound. Reviews of subjects is provided and scores are shown on the screen. The three games are: Spelling Bee, That Did It!, and Space Race. Nice graphics are presented to show a correct, or incorrect, spelling try. A magician drops a ball from a hat to the floor each time you miss in That Did It! and stars and space ships move when you are right in Space Race. If you fail to type the word into the computer, the program repeats the word aloud to remind you that it is waiting!

When a word is missed the screen prints out the word and at the end of the session the correct and incorrect words are read aloud by the console. Most of the words are very easy to understand, even for someone who is not accustomed to synthetic speech. A study manual for the student is included and it is well presented. Becky loved it, until she spelled one wrong! I believe the word she used to describe it was "decent!" Dad! It is an excellent spelling series and I think that your children will learn much from its use. The speech synthesizer is needed. Suggested retail is $54.95 and your price is $41.50. Please specify desired grade level!

ATTENTION: NEW USER GROUP HOURS!

Effective September 1, 1982 our telephone hours will be Monday through Friday from 10:30 A.M. until 7:00 P.M. Please restrict your calls to this schedule!!! We will not be available on Saturday or Sunday henceforth, as it is infringing on our personal lives. If there is an "important" reason to visit us on the weekend, please call first! We will make exceptions for special circumstances. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

SOFTWARE CONTROVERSEY SOLVED?

We received a myriad of suggested solutions that ranged from practical to ludicrious. Listed below are the tenative final proposals.

1. Produce the newsletter eight times a year instead of six and perhaps lengthen it by one or two pages.
2. Offer owner written programs to members at a cost of $2 each with royalities paid to the author. Hard copy only.
3. Offer selected owner written programs on cassette tape with prices that range from $7.50 to $12.50. Such programs would be of a superior quality.
4. Make available a program directory of both free and saleable software programs. Each user would be limited to twelve free programs in hard copy. The additional offerings with royalities paid to the authors and expanded newsletter would offset the original proposal of twenty-four free programs.

This policy will go into effect on 10,1,82 if the majority of you approve. Responses are requested no later than 9,27,82. Thanks!

SIMPLIFIED SCREEN READER

By, C. Oxley

Load this basic program in first, and then key in the program you wish to work with. When you run the program an error message can be read by typing RUN 1000. It takes some time to iniatiliaze, so be patient. It will read all screen messages, as this program is not specific as to what is not to be read.

```
1000 REM SPELL/SPEAK SCREEN  1010 OPEN#1:"SPEECH",OUTPUT  1020 FOR Z1=1 TO
24  1030 Z1$=""  1040 FOR Z2=1 TO 32  1050 CALL GCHAR(Z1,Z2,Z3)  1060 PRINT#1:
CHR$(Z3)  1070 Z1$=Z1$&CHR$(Z3)  1080 NEXT Z2  1090 PRINT#1:Z1$  1100 NEXT Z1
1110 END
```

EDITORS NOTE: This is not the same program mentioned earlier in this newsletter that is going to be sold for $12.50! This is a much simplified version and is much slower and less efficient. Nevertheless, it is impressive.

CALL KEY OPTION WITH SOUND PROMPT

We are always getting questions about the use of the CALL KEY function, so here is a simple and short example routine. Use of the CALL KEY can eliminate alot of input statements and clean your screen up. It is in TI Basic.

```
10 REM CALL KEY WITH SOUND PROMPT  20 CALL SCREEN(8)  30 CALL CLEAR
40 PRINT TAB(4);"PRESS THE DESIRED KEY!"::::::::  50 PRINT"MACHINEGUN FIRE -M- "::
60 PRINT"LASER -L-"::::::  70 CALL KEY(0,K,S)  80 CALL SOUND(100,-3,1)
90 FOR I=1 TO 200  100 NEXT I  110 IF S=0 THEN 70  120 IF K=77 THEN 140
130 IF K=76 THEN 200 ELSE 70  140 FOR T=1 TO 15  150 CALL SCREEN(7)
160 CALL SOUND(75,-6,1 ) 170 CALL SCREEN(12)  180 NEXT T  190 GOTO 10
200 CALL SCREEN(2)  210 CALL CHAR(96,"FFFF0000000000000")  220 FOR N=1 TO 15
230 CALL HCHAR(12,1,96,32)  240 CALL COLOR(9,16,1)  250 CALL SOUND(25,
3000,1,500,5)  260 CALL CLEAR  270 NEXT N 280 GOTO 10
```

BACK ISSUES ARE AVAILABLE!

We have some remaining back issues of newsletters for the following months: March, April, May, and July. If you need copies please let us know and enclose $.54 to cover mailing. Let us know which ones that you need.

MED ALERT!: DON'T BE HOME WITHOUT IT!

This X/Basic Disk based program is offered by FUTURA for $34.95 and is both educational and emergency orientated. What do you do if your child ingests gasoline or is stung by a wasp or takes too many depressants? There are many emergency procedures that you can use at home while waiting for the professional EMS team to arrive! The menu offers you options from immediate emergency phone numbers to emergency first-aid to counterdose procedures for poisons to a poison primer. You can learn about dangerous house plants and yard plants, high risk poison spots of your home, and how to use Mr. Yuck. It is well written, very comprehensive, and easy to use. This program was never intended to replace emergency treatment by qualified professionals, but to help you do the right things until that help can be obtained! Everyone should read it completely through to become familiar with it, as well as to train persons in the home, or school, on :"what to do if..." . We found it to run with no bugs and highly reccommend it to everyone. Because we want you to have a copy we are reducing the price to $31.95 for the month of September. You can't afford to be without this lifesaving program! X/Basic and Disk required.

See the advertisement in the 99'er, Volume 1, Number 6, page 56.

SKY-DIVER: PULL THAT CORD AND PRAY!

We recently received a copy of this program from Maple Leaf Micro Ware, Kanata, Ontario, Canada, and were highly impressed. The author, Larry J. Sabo, is no novice when it comes to professional programming and his work does reflect it. We were so impressed that we are going to offer all of their fine software packages to you henceforth!

The plane zoomed across the screen and I tried to gauge the wind velocity and direction by the trailing streamer. Below loomed the small red target I had to land in. I jumped out of the safety of the plane and watched my frail body drop downwards through the atmosphere. Gravity being what it is, I was picking up speed rapidly and starting to drift off the target site! I used the game controls to correct my position and reached for my ripcord. I pulled hard and nothing happened! Desperately I yanked the reserve chute cord and it billowed out above me. I was now off course and had only a few sparce seconds to get my position corrected or else! I used the game controls to tug on my chute cords and just managed to hit the edge of the safety zone.

The game is a nice simulation done in X/Basic and is definately exciting. You can control the plane direction and whether or not to employ the trailing streamer. You control the sky-diver as far as clockwise/counterclockwise rotation, and you control the movement of the parachutist. The wind changes in accordance to altitude and a nice random factor complicates things! It is scored on accuracey, a direct perfect landing being 100 points. The graphics are colorful and crisp, the sound is well done, and play action is excellent. Our best score was 92, although my compatriot killed us off many times because he forgot to employ the parachute! Sighted people, some times they are disgusting! We are looking forward to the next release called Hang Glider Pilot. The retail price for Sky-Diver is $19.95 and it is on tape in X/Basic.

A SPECIAL THANKS

I would like a take a few lines here and now to express my personal gratitude to several people who make this users group operate. First, and without a doubt, foremost is my wife, Linda. It is her vision that helps me answer your letters, edit the newsletter, ship the UPS orders, and so much more. She is invaluable to me personally, and I want her to know that her relentless hours of effort are appreciated. Then there are Shelly and Becky. They dutifully read the mail, send out PR packs, help me with programs on the screen, and myriads of other tasks. Finally there is Gary Teachout, a close personal friend of the family. He spends coutless hours assisting me in program reviews, debugging, program construction, and many other technical chores. They all volunteer their time for you and I believe that they each deserve a special thank you from all of us. As for Linda, I may raise her kiss rations, as she is priceless! From the President himself, THANKS GUYS!!!

PASCAL: A NOTATION

We understand that the Basic Compiller is not scheduled for release at any time in the near future. The software packages are reported to be shipping now. We desperately need more information on the whole subject!

INVENTORY MANAGEMENT: FUTURA SOFTWARE REVIEW

This program enables a small business person to keep a constant record of items in and out of stock. It permits you to enter up to 1368 different products by part number. You may also divide products into different departments for ease of stock handling; such as "ED" for educational software and "GM" for games. You can describe the physical location of each product; such as bin number, and describe the product by its proper name. You are allowed to indicate if each product is taxable or not and to post the quanities in stock. Other features include items back ordered, three unit price options...exp. wholesale, retail, discount, sales to date, monthly sales, printing purchase orders and reports, and more. You have invoice numbers available and full printer control through the computer enviroment sub-program.

This program can also be interfaced with the General Ledger, Accounts Payable and Accounts Recievable, and Billing programs. The printed reports are well formated and the columns are neat. The screen displays are sharp and easy to follow. The documentation is quite well done and does contain examples of operations. It ran well for us and we did not discover any serious problems. The system requirements are as follows: X/Basic, X/RAM-32K, Disk Memory System-2 drives, RS/232 Interface, and acceptable line printer. The suggested retail by FUTURA is $99.95 and your user cost is $85. (FUTURA plans to raise the price on 10,1,82 to $149.95!)

THE LOAD PROGRAM: GET LOADED ON THIS!

If you have X/Basic and a Disk Memory System, then this program can save you a good deal of time and trouble. If your X/Basic is inserted and if your desired diskette is in your drive, then just hit number 2 twice. The X/Basic module automatically searches for the load program and will exercise it if it finds it. You can use it with a single program or a series of them.

First you must write the load program itself, and that is rather easy. RUN"DSK1.program name" and assign it your favorite line number! Save it under the name of "LOAD"! The program name you use in the load program must match the program you wish it to load. You can write a longer program and use a menu with the CALL KEY function to permit direct access of as many programs as the diskette is able to hold. The end of each of these programs can have a line added that will cause the program to revert back to the main menu load program. Such as: 2000 RUN"DSK1.LOAD" It is simple to do and a real time saver for us lazy creatures! No, it won't work with your cassette recorder!

WANT FASTER EXECUTION?

You can speed your program execution up if you have X/Basic and X/RAM. Near the start of the program write: 10 CALL INIT::CALL LOAD(-31878,0) This will disable the sprites and increase execution speed. If you haven't already tried this procedure, do so. It does make a marked difference! However, be sure to tell your friends who do not have the X/RAM to delete this line, as it will cause a program crash.

BOOKS?: WHERE TO GET THEM

I must appologize to those of you who dutifully sent us your checks for the books mentioned in our July newsletter. We do not handle these types of books, guys, and regret not mentioning that fact. However, here is how to find some of those illusive books that do not appear on the shelves of your favorite "large" bookstore.

You may inquire at the TI Bookstore, P.O. Box 3646 M/S 84, Dallas, TX 75285 or phone them at: 214-995 4844. You may order by mail only from: P.O. Box 225012 M/S 54, Dallas, TX 75265.

The Technical Manual for the TI 99/4A is now available for $15, plus your state tax, and a $2 shipping fee. Obtain it from: Texas Instruments, Parts Department, P.O. Box 53, Lubbock, TX 79408. The Editor/Assembler manual is also available for $14.95 from Consumer Relations, P.O. Box 53, Lubbock, TX 79408. No phone orders are accepted!

TRY THIS CASSETTE!

One of our Ohio members reports tremendous success with the Toshiba model KT1500 cassette recorder. He is using two of them for data purposes and has had virtually no problems. Perfectly compatable? Could be!

TEX TREK: NEW COSMIC THRILLER!

This X/Basic game was written by Steve Johnson of Midland, MI, and is one of the nicest trek-style games we have seen. It has instructions on a cassette along with the program. This game isn't one where the bad dudes sit around waiting to get wasted like so many ducks in a barrel! A full review in the next newsletter. It will be marketed by us starting September 20, 1982 for a price of $12.50. You need the console, cassette recorder, and X/Basic to run it. I think that you are going to like this one!

PROBLEMS WITH FALL MEETINGS

We have a place to meet, but we have a serious problem with equipment. It is not possible for us to move our PES and associated cards from its present location. The unit is too sensitive and damage can result too easily from frequent dismantling. Therefore, some of you are going to have to volunteer your equipment; old RS/232, old Controller, old Disk Drive, and old RAM-32K. We will supply the consoles, speech synthesizers, modules, and so forth. If you want a meeting, then it is going to be up to you to help us set them up! It has even been suggested that each Michigan member kick in so much to allow the group proper to own its own full blown system. This would be located at the Flint U. of M. and available to all members for use. Got any ideas? Let us know and maybe we can work this meeting problem out quickly. Sorry guys, but you simply outgrew my house! Thirty people is alot of sweating armpits to cope with!

I noted that we were mentioned in the 99'er, Vol. 1, No. 6, on page 24 in an article by Lawrence R. De Rusha, Jr. titled "HOW TO START A USERS GROUP."

99/4 USERS OF AMERICA
508 MERIT DR.
FLINT, MI 48505
1-313-736 3774

99/4 USERS OF AMERICA
DUANE B. FISCHER, PRES.
5028 MERIT DR.
FLINT, MI 48506

FLINT, MI 485
NOV 3
PM
1982

[redacted]
Rt East
Newport, OR 97365